

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT OF 2008

On September 28, 2008, Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) introduced H.R. 7208, the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Act of 2008.

BILL SUMMARY

The Teen Dating Violence Prevention Act of 2008 establishes a national teen dating violence prevention initiative. This legislation authorizes the Department of Justice to develop targeted grants that:

- ◆ provide rehabilitative services and counseling to both victims and abusers;
- ◆ assist youth relationship abuse victims who are runaway, homeless, foster care, or youth offenders;
- ◆ offer legal services for victims to learn more about protections and resources available to them;
- ◆ develop and implement prevention programs that provide education, counseling, and identify best practices about the traits and ways to prevent abusive relationships;
- ◆ encourage collaborative prevention and reduction strategies; and
- ◆ enhance relationship abuse prevention programs and reduction services through community-based solutions.

ABOUT ABUSIVE YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

Youth dating violence is the pattern of one young person controlling the behaviors of their dating partner. The techniques to achieve this control can include physical violence, verbal, mental, and emotional abuse, stalking, and other forms of harassment.

- Like adult domestic violence, teen dating violence crosses all social and economic classes, races, cultures, genders, and sexual orientations.
- Most parents are unaware of teen dating violence and have not had discussions with their children about recognizing the signs of abuse and finding resources to stop it.
- Young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of intimate violence; more than half of all rape cases occur before the victim reaches age 18.
- Those who experience dating violence are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress, dissociation, anxiety, and depression. Nearly half of the young people who reported being victims of dating violence also reported attempted suicide.
- Technology – cell phones and the Internet – can enhance threatening and abusive behaviors in youth dating relationships. For example, 30 percent of teens say they are text messaged 10, 20, or 30 times an hour by a partner inquiring where they are, what they're doing, or who they're with.
- One in five teens in a serious relationship reports physical abuse by a partner; unfortunately, on 30% of teens actually report when their being abuse. Less than three percent of teen victims report abuse to the police, their parents, or other authority figures.